

ANCIENT PYRAMIDS DISCOVERED IN EUROPE

Investigation of pyramid-shaped structures found in Europe, especially Bosnia, may show that the territory of the megalithic builders of prehistory was much wider than believed.

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Europe's pyramid history uncovered

On 31 October 2005, various news agencies including Associated Press ran a story headlined "Bosnian explorer finds 'Europe's first pyramids'". This statement, as so many headlines are, is wrong. There are many small pyramids that can be found across Europe, from France to Greece.

The small pyramid of Falicon sits in the hinterland of the prosperous French resort of Nice and is more notorious for covering a subterranean chamber into which many descend but few resurface without the intervention of the local fire brigade.

In Greece, there are now 16 catalogued pyramids. Though some may be natural, others—like the Hellenikon pyramid near the village of Argolis—are clearly man-made structures. Intriguingly, one thermo-luminescence test by the Academy of Athens has dated the structure to 2720 BC, contemporaneous with the Egyptian pyramid age.

Though pyramidal in shape, the European structures do not enthral like the Egyptian pyramids, which dwarf them in size.

Five hundred years ago, with the discovery of the New World, pyramids were found in Mexico, but in 2001 the discovery of a pyramid complex in Caral, Peru, was announced and again has been dated as contemporaneous with the Egyptian pyramid age.

In 1994, the German tour operator Hartwig Hausdorf visited China and on his return reported on the existence of pyramids there—a discovery which has since been validated. The pyramids are even becoming a tourist attraction.

Europe, it seemed, had been left behind...but not for long. Two discoveries—in Italy in 2003, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2005—changed that.

The pyramids of Montevecchia, Italy

In early 2003, the pyramids of Montevecchia ("Old Mountain" in English), only about 30 miles from the Italian city of Milan, were discovered with the use of satellite and aerial imagery. These pyramids are completely covered by earth and vegetation and now appear to be natural hills, but the possibility of something more was enough for the Czech *WM* magazine and its editor-in-chief Georg Wojnar to visit the area in an effort to locate and survey the site. The team arrived on 8 May 2003.

Finding the location of the pyramids from the ground proved more difficult than imagined, the team becoming "impressed" with the driving abilities required to negotiate their way towards the hills. After two days, they succeeded in locating the pyramids and began carrying out an initial survey.

The team's conclusions appeared in the June 2003 issue of *WM*. The first pyramid was estimated to have a base of 100 metres and a height of 50 metres. Three pyramids in total were surveyed, with one pyramid showing clear signs of stones worked into the structure, close to the surface. A platform with an oblong superstructure of 18 by 9 metres in size was also discovered.

All three structures have an inclination of 42 to 43 degrees. The sides of all the pyramids align and are offset from the cardinal points by approximately 7–12 degrees northeast. The team wondered whether this was an error in design or a sign of something more intriguing. From the initial aerial surveys, there was speculation that the layout of these pyramids compares with that of the pyramids of the Giza plateau and thus to the Orion constellation—a theory proposed by architect Robert Bauval. The Czech team argued that their on-site research showed that the pyramids actually align with the passing of Orion at sunrise on the summer solstice.

As for the question of when they were built, Italian archaeologist Professor Gregoria was asked for input. He provisionally dated the structures to 3000 BC, making them largely contemporaneous with the Egyptian pyramid-building age.

But no remains in the vicinity have been found that can shed any further light on these structures, and no civilisation is known to have inhabited the region and to have built similar structures at the time.

As a consequence and despite the positive findings by the Czech team, some critics have argued that the Montevocchia structures may be nothing more than terraced hills with stone supports.

The Czech team, however, suggested that the site should be known as "the Italian Giza".

The Italian discovery failed to excite the media, if only because no archaeological investigations were—and have been—carried out. Europe might have a pyramid...but no one was too sure.

The Bosnian pyramids discovered

In late October 2005, émigré Bosnian explorer Semir "Sam" Osmanagich believed he could announce the discovery of the first uncontested, ancient and large pyramid in Europe.

The story ran in the leading Bosnian newspaper *Dnevni Avaz*, which reported matter of factly: "...the 45-year-old is so certain two pyramids are hidden in Visoko Valley that he has spent some 16,000 euros [US\$20,000] researching the area, located either side

of a river about 30 kilometres [18 miles] from the Bosnian capital. Residents of the nearby town of Visoko have long known about the presence of the two structures they always referred to as 'pyramids' but none of them was ever intrigued enough to investigate further."

Osmanagich lives in Houston, Texas, and because of his fascination for cultures of antiquity he has visited many ancient structures of the New World and written several books. In April 2005, he was promoting his new book in Sarajevo when he decided to visit Visoko.

He had learned about the hill from Senad Hodovich, director of the Visoko Historic Heritage Museum. The area is rich in Bronze Age artefacts, many of which are on display in the museum, and the hill itself is believed to be the site of a mediaeval village.

The local people refer to the hill as "the pyramid", which means that everyone has noticed its pyramid shape...but is it a pyramid?

The likelihood that Osmanagich was confronted with a true pyramid soon became apparent. "While I was on the top of the Visocica hill, I noticed that the shape of the hill is a symmetrical geometric form, aligned to the cardinal points of the compass and with a flat top," he said in an email interview with this author. "Across the valley, there was another hill called Pljesevica, with obvious triangular sides.

Even though the hills were covered with forest, I immediately 'recognised' the pyramids." Osmanagich has seen similar pairs of pyramids in Latin America, which together created a gateway into a valley.

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Aerial photograph from a 1954 postcard featuring the Visoko township and the Visocica pyramid hill in the background.

Digging for confirmation

An initial survey showed that the Visocica hill structure measures approximately 70 metres (230 feet) high, with a square base of 220 by 220 metres (730 by 730 feet). It confirmed that the structure is aligned precisely with the cardinal points of the compass—as is the second pyramid nearby. A postcard depicting a 1954 aerial photograph shows the obvious pyramid-like structure of the hill, which looks anything but natural.

But Osmanagich did not want to leave it at that. "Three months after my initial visit," he wrote, "I gathered all necessary permits and started with a geological survey in order to confirm my hypothesis.

The first survey, conducted by geologist Nadja Nukich, was performed in August of 2005 and geological tests of the soil, penetrating 17 metres [56 feet] into the structure, showed 15 anomalies, suggesting that some layers of the hill were man-made. I had solid proof that the hill was not a natural formation."

Nukich was most impressed with three layers of polished brown stone that lie an equal distance from each other underground. The hill, it seemed, had been coated with a type of "bad concrete", an unusual mixture of gravel once used to form the blocks which cover the hill.

It was at this time that Osmanagich decided to invest in follow-up research. In October 2005, he returned to carry out further geological and archaeological investigations, with fascinating results. The walls of the Visocica pyramid were found to be built from breccia stone blocks. When these blocks were cleaned, the team found that they had been placed like bricks in a brick wall: the upper block was moved inwards in relation to the lower one.

Some of the stones were removed and were found to have a flat, smooth surface.

The results of the test probes inside the structure proved that it is indeed a stone step pyramid. A flat plateau, approximately 2.5 metres wide, is followed by a steep slope of 30 metres, then another plateau, then another steep slope with the same angle—a pattern that is repeated to the top of the pyramid, which has a plateau and the possible remains of a stone structure.

The team also discovered that "...the entrance causeway is paved with manufactured sandstone blocks. They are 10 cm thick, cut by human hand, polished and then transported to this area." Amazingly, the length of this paved causeway is an enormous 420 metres (1/4 mile) and is perhaps the best evidence that proves we are confronted by a genuine man-made pyramid.

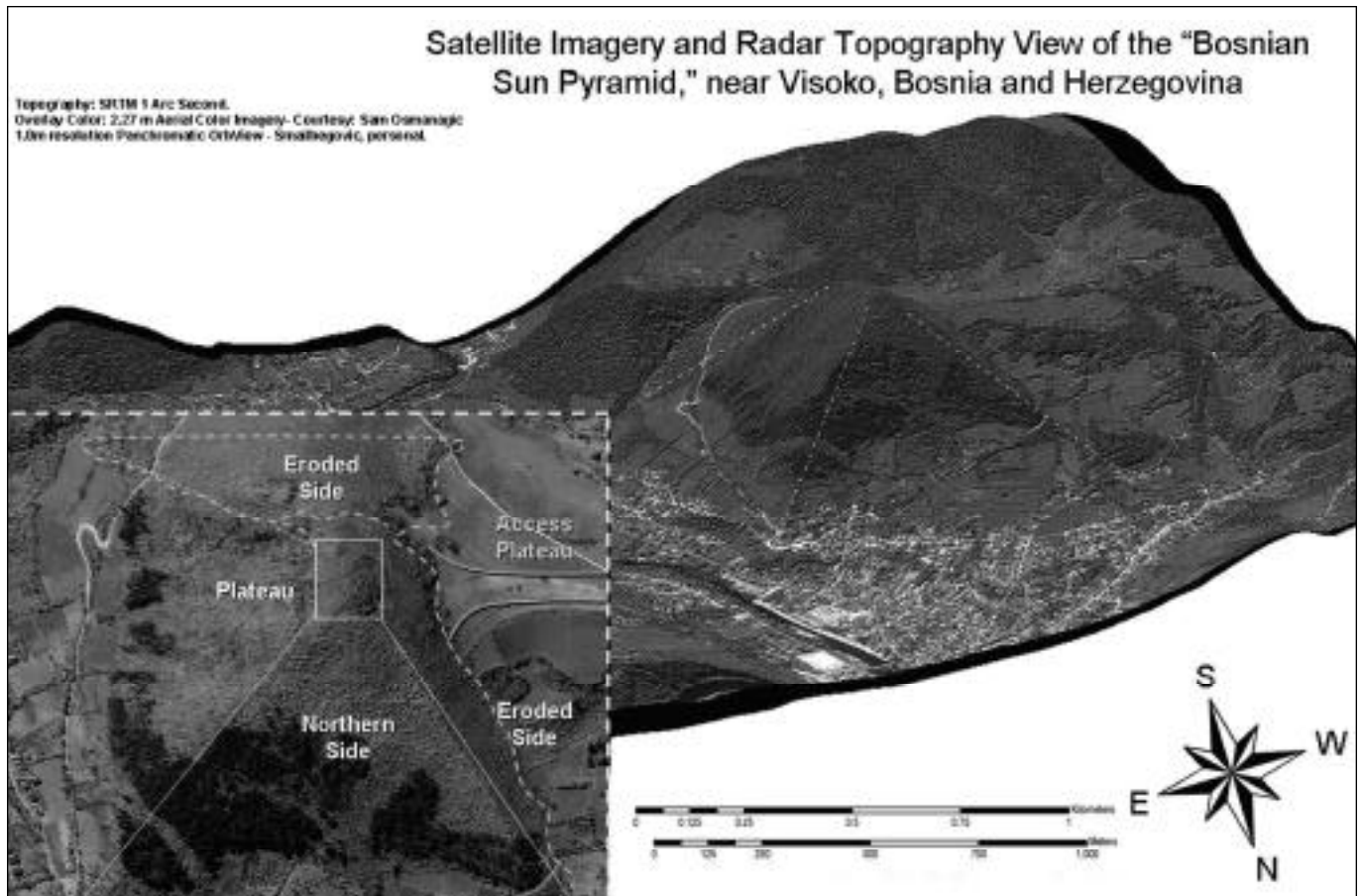
Small-scale excavations continued until early November, when winter set in, with the work focusing on what may have been the entrance to a pyramid-shaped temple on top of the structure.

The team also found underground tunnels. "There are a number of 'intersections' along the way. Most of them are covered with dirt and rocks, but we will begin to clean them from the spring of 2006 onwards," Osmanagich noted.

Within a period of six months, the Bosnian team had carried out an amazing amount of work.

"Visocica hill could not have been shaped like this by nature," geologist Nadja Nukich stated unambiguously, according to a BBC report of 26 October. "This is already far more than we have anticipated, but we expect a lot more from further analysis."

Originally, Osmanagich believed that an existing hill had been re-formed into a pyramid shape and then coated with a type of



Satellite photographs of Visoko with the suggested original dimensions of the Visocica hill "Sun pyramid" shown in dotted lines.

primitive concrete. But in November 2005, after larger areas were unearthed, the team concluded that the whole hill is actually a stone structure—a conclusion that has since been confirmed by satellite and thermal imagery.

Excavating and dating the Bosnian pyramids

Newspapers want conclusions, so Osmanagich had to provide an interpretation of these structures, even though archaeological excavations had only just begun. He speculates that the pyramids come in a pair, one symbolising the Sun, the other the Moon. The Visocica hill has thus been labelled the "the Bosnian pyramid of the Sun". The "Bosnian pyramid of Moon" he believes to be under the neighbouring hill of Pljesevica.

Osmanagich added in the interview: "Beside these two artificial structures, several other mounds exist in the same valley, and they tend to have very geometric (triangular) sides and clear, linear breaks. Dr Amer Smailbegovich (Reno, Nevada) has applied remote sensing techniques that showed that the Bosnian pyramids of the Sun and Moon exhibit flat, triangular sides with clear geometric break-lines between the flat sides. The observed phenomena are not to be confused with triangular facets naturally occurring in a tectonic setting, for those occurrences only exhibit single-side triangulation and are uneven in appearance, whereas the observed anomalies exhibit two or more, even triangular sides. The results of thermal inertia [tests] suggest that the pyramids are composed of less consolidated material and tend to cool faster than the surrounding mounds (which are presumed to be denser). This finding is congruent with what would be expected from an artificial structure—lesser density materials, porosity, internal cavities all contribute to increased [heat] loss."

These mounds which Osmanagich mentions are mutually equidistant and all align to the cardinal directions. The two pyramid structures and a third which *could* be a pyramid are of approximately the same height but differ in overall size.

Osmanagich believes that we can thus "freely talk about the Bosnian Valley of the Pyramids".



Semir Osmanagich examines the Visocica pyramid hill's sandstone blocks during preliminary investigations of the site in late 2005.

So who built these pyramids, and how old are they? Osmanagich believes that the hills were reshaped by the Illyrian people, who inhabited the Balkan Peninsula long before Slavic tribes conquered it around AD 600. Little is known about the Illyrians, but Osmanagich thinks they were more sophisticated than many experts have suggested—evidence for which would be the pyramids themselves.

Osmanagich has unfortunately been misquoted about the possible age of these pyramids as being 27,000 years. This is what Osmanagich actually said: "It's very well known that a medieval Bosnian town existed on the top of the hill between the 13th and 14th centuries. Artefacts that show traces of small Roman and Illyrian observation posts (2,000 and 2,500 years old, respectively) have also been found. It is a classic example that a later culture built their villages on top of earlier structures. (The same example is seen in Cholula, Mexico, where Hernán Cortés built a huge church on the top of the hill. Three hundred years later, it turned out that the church was built on top of the largest pyramid in Mexico.) These findings show that it is more than 3,000 years old. We know that Bosnia has continuously been populated for 27,000 years. So, the pyramids must have been built in between these two dates." So the date could be anywhere between 1000 BC and 25,000 BC, though Osmanagich personally favours the Illyrian period, thus providing a much more conservative date than that quoted by the media. Considering the importance of the discovery, the original team has now established a foundation called Archaeological Park: Bosnian Pyramid of the Sun, which is sanctioned by the Bosnian Justice Department and already has a number of Bosnian archaeologists, geologists, geophysicists, historians and other experts amongst its members.

"We are in the process of forming an international advisory board and applying for grants and sponsorships. It is very interesting that for the first time in a long period, Bosnian politicians on all political levels have united to give support for this project," said Osmanagich.

Excavation, restoration and long-term protection of the site will recommence on 14 April 2006, after the winter snow.

"Hundreds of experts and students, cleaning crews and enthusiasts will come to the middle of mountainous Bosnia to take part in a fantastic archaeological event," Osmanagich added. "We plan once again to work until the first snow comes at the end of October."

And as such, Europe has truly entered the pyramid age...

About the Author :

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